

**12 Most Famous Paintings of all Time**  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y65\\_Qs1Wq0w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y65_Qs1Wq0w)  
**transcript: <https://dontveter.com/ec/12paintings.pdf>**

One of the oldest art forms, painting has been around ever since our ancient ancestors first started producing charcoal creations on cave walls.

While countless generations of artists have left their mark over the millennia only some artworks have succeeded in transcending time and culture to be revered around the globe.

Here's a look at the most famous paintings of all time found in museums around the world.

Number 12: American Gothic, now hanging in the Art Institute of Chicago.

American Gothic is one of the most famous paintings of 20th century rural Americana.

Grant Woods defining masterpiece was painted in 1930 and depicts a farmer and his daughter standing in front of what is now known as the American Gothic house.

Initially, locals and art critics took the somber tones and characters puritanical clothes as a critique of rural life.

The onset of the Great Depression however, saw the painting become associated with the resoluteness and indomitable spirit of the American pioneers.

Number eleven: The Persistence of Memory, one of the greatest and most distinctive works of surrealist art of all time.

Salvador Dali's The Persistence of Memory really does stand out from the crowd.

In the 1931 painting, we can see melting pocket watches draped across a bleak landscape.

The strange scene is widely thought to have been inspired by Albert Einstein's theory of relativity.

Dali's fantastic creation can be enjoyed at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

Number 10: The Kiss, painted between 1907 and 1908 during the height of Gustav Klimt golden period.

The Kiss veritably shimmers and shines before your eyes as gold, silver and platinum radiates forth from the canvas.

Influenced by both the arts and crafts and art nouveau movements, the painting depicts two gold clad lovers entwined in an intimate embrace.

Just one of the many highlights of the Belvedere in Vienna's extensive collection, The Kiss is Klimt's most popular and enthralling work.

Number nine: Nighthawks, another of the Art Institute of Chicago's most famous artworks is Nighthawks, which was painted by Edward Hopper in 1942.

In the oil painting, we can see four people in a diner late at night.

Light shines out of the brightly lit interior illuminating the darkness outside through the large glass window.

While many take it to depict loneliness and isolation, Hopper himself said it alluded more to potential predators in the night.

One of American arts most popular and parodied paintings Nighthawks is the most renowned and recognizable of Hopper's artworks.

Number eight: The Great Wave off Kanagawa, the most famous painting to come out of Japan, the Great Wave off Kanagawa was produced by Hokusai using a woodblock print technique sometime between 1829 and 1833.

The stunning scene, with its vivid blues, sees an enormous wave threatening to engulf three fishing boats.

It was developed as part of the artist's 36 views of Mount Fuji series.

The iconic volcano can be spotted in the background.

Due to the fact that numerous prints were made, original impressions of the Great Wave off Kanagawa can be found in the British Museum and the Metropolitan Museum of Art among others.

Number seven: Water Lilies, consisting of some 250 different paintings, Claude Monet's Water Lilies series was painted at his home in Giverny, between 1896 and 1926.

The main subject of the paintings is the water lily pond in the back of his garden with various other flowers, a wooden bridge and a majestic weeping willow.

Also featuring one of the great French Impressionists, Claude Monet's paintings are instantly recognizable and are on display in museums around the world.

Number six: Night Watch, arguably the most famous artwork of the RIC Museum in Amsterdam, The Night Watch is one of the most magnificent paintings to ever emerge from the Dutch Golden Age.

Painted in 1642 by Rembrandt van Rijn, the enormous canvas portrays a group of civic guards as they head off to practice their shooting.

For much of its existence, the painting was coated with a dark varnish which gave the incorrect impression that it depicted a night scene thus leading to the name, Night Watch.

The painting is famed for its dramatic use of light that makes it seem as if the life-size figures are actually moving before us.

Number five: The Scream.

The Scream is a series of expressionist paintings and prints by Norwegian artist Edvard Munch showing an agonized figure against a bloody red sky.

The landscape is the background of Oslo fjord viewed from a hill in Oslo.

Edvard Munch created several versions of The Scream in various media.

The first version was painted in 1893 and is on display in the National Gallery of Norway.

It was stolen in 1994 in a high-profile art theft and recovered several months later in 2004.

Another version of the screen was stolen from the Munch museum only to be recovered in 2006.

Number four: Girl With a Pearl Earring.

Although it is often compared with the Mona Lisa, Johannes Vermeer's Girl With a Pearl Earring is in fact, truly not a portrait.

Thought to have been painted around 1665 by the Dutch master, the captivating artwork depicts an imagined rather than real girl wearing a blue turban and a sizable glimmering pearl earring.

Tracy Chevalier wrote a historic novel fictionalizing the circumstances of the paintings creation.

The novel inspired a 2003 film with Scarlett Johansson as Johannes Vermeer's assistant wearing the pearl earring.

Number three: The Last Supper, painted in the 1490s on a refectory wall in a monastery in Milan, The Last Supper is one of the most recognizable artworks on Earth.

While the years have not been kind to the original, the convent still sees people come from all over the world to catch a glimpse of the fabulous fresco.

The marvelous mural depicts the scene where Jesus Christ tells the Twelve Apostles sitting to either side of him that one of them will betray him.

Some writers propose that the person in the paintings seated to the left of Jesus is Mary Magdalene rather than John the Apostle.

This popular theory plays a central role in Dan Brown's novel The DaVinci Code.

Number two: Starry Night, Vincent van Gogh's defining work, Starry Night, describes the view he could see out of his asylum window in Saint-Rémy-de-Provence after he had a breakdown and cut off part of his own ear in 1888.

The iconic scene shows a swirling night sky punctuated with stars overlooking a still sleeping village.

The Dutch post impressionist painter's stunning creation is now exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art in New York and is one of the most valued works in their extensive collection.

Number one: The Mona Lisa, widely considered to be the most famous painting in the world.

The Mona Lisa has delighted on lookers ever since it was painted in the early 1500s by Leonardo da Vinci.

The painting is named for Lisa del Giocondo, a member of a wealthy family in Florence.

In 1911, the Mona Lisa was stolen by Louvre employee Vincenzo Peruggia, an Italian patriot who believed the Mona Lisa should be returned to Italy.

After having kept the painting in his apartment for two years Perugia was finally caught when he attempted to sell it to the Uffizi Gallery in Florence.

Today the Mona Lisa hangs again in the Louvre in Paris where six million people see the painting each year.